

VETERANS BENEFITS AWARENESS TASK FORCE
MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION
Wednesday, January 22, 2003 — 3:00 PM
VFW Post 1003, 217 E. Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO

In attendance:

John Eckhoff, Veterans Service Manager St. Louis County Dept. of Human Services; **Ralph Durnbaugh**, Director of Planning; **Linda Duffen**, Columbia VA Hospital; **Sharon Keith**, Director, Service to Veterans Program; **Lt. Governor Joe Maxwell**, State of Missouri; **Maria Chappelle-Nadal**, Elderly Advocate, Lt. Governor Office; **Carl H. Niewoehner**, Chairman, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Kathy Sturgeon**, St. Louis County Dept. of Human Services; **Jill Talken**, Executive Secretary, Missouri Veterans Commission; **James Hughes**, State Commandor MO Veterans of Foreign Wars; **Stan Smith**, Administrator Warrensburg State Veterans Home; **Hal Dulle**, Assistant Director, Missouri Veterans Commission; **James Whitfield**, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; **Don Long**, Administrator Mt. Vernon State Veterans Home; **Erica Way**, St. Louis County Human Services; **Lawrence Helm**, St. Louis County Human Services; **Emmett Fairfax**, Commissioner Missouri Veterans Commission; **Bernadette Miller**, Commissioner Missouri Veterans Commission; **Joseph Frank**; **Jerry Quigley**, Director Jacksonville State Veterans Cemetery; **Jess Rasmussen**, Director Higginsville State Veterans Cemetery; **Mike Robbins**, Director Springfield State Veterans Cemetery; **Ken Swarengin**, Director Bloomfield State Veterans Cemetery; **Bonnie McNeal Boyt**, Missouri Veterans Commission; **Christina Acree**, Missouri Veterans Commission and many other guest.

- I. **Opening Remarks** – Joe Maxwell, Lt. Governor, State of Missouri, welcomed all the task force members and thanked them for their hard work and for coming today. Today is recognized as Veterans Appreciation Day. He explained our goal is to make sure everyday is Veterans Appreciation Day. The Mayor of Sedalia has expressed interest in raising veterans' awareness. The state of Missouri is ranked from 45th to 35th since the start of the VBATF but remarks we have a long way to go. The Governor of Missouri and Ron Taylor have worked out a plan to continue funding \$48,000 for our basic 800#. He encourages all to drop a letter to the Governor and to the legislators thanking them for the funding support of the program. The Lt. Governor will continue to work to raise private money for the outreach program. He encouraged everyone to continue to work together with the service organizations throughout the state to improve our relative ranking and expressed the importance of leadership.

Updates- Ralph Durnbaugh reported the task force is continuing to work on several different methods of outreach programs.

The past week 4,677 VBATF mail stuffers were mailed out to veterans. These names and addresses were provided to the commission as a result of a survey conducted by the Senior Rx Program.

Claim Services Office assists veterans with claims and were provided 1,000 VBATF mail stuffers to hand out to their clients. A Veterans Benefits Awareness ad will be published in their monthly publication.

Masonic Home of Missouri contacted us and will be running a Veterans Benefits Awareness ad in their publication which has 51,000 subscribers.

Currently working with Rural Missouri and Today's Farmer Magazine to run an ad in the May, June and October publications. The Rural Missouri reaches over 450,000 households throughout the state.

Task Force also will be looking into "Veterans in Classrooms" project in working with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in facilitating throughout the state. The Lt. Governor asked the members of the task force to speak to service organizations and see if interested in speaking bureau concepts. The Lt. Governor would like to introduce "Veterans in Classrooms" to the State Board of Education about adoption of this to their curriculum development program if enough interest. It would be necessary to develop a package that a veteran can take to schools to present. Joe Frank indicated that the American Legion has an award winning video they show to middle school age students educating them about veterans. The Lt. Governor expressed the need for input from the service organizations prior to moving forward. Hal Dulle was asked to contact veteran service organizations and report results back to the task force at the next meeting. If there is interest in this project, he would like to have program in place for next school year.

John Eckhoff reported the past year's three St. Louis area Supermarket attendance brought in 850 veterans and over 66 agencies together. The reports from the two Supermarkets in Kansas City area have not been turned in at this time. This information helps to assist with determining if large number of veterans in that area is in need of a particular assistance from an agency.

Mr. Durnbaugh indicated after speaking with contact in the St. Louis County area the St. Louis Veterans Benefits Supermarket for 2003 will be moved to July rather than December and St. Joseph Supermarket will be in November. December will be left open.

The first planning meeting for the Joplin Supermarket will be on January 30 in Joplin. This meeting will allow us to determine market and number of organizations for that area and target a mid to late March Supermarket date. Contacted Mayor of Carthage, Mayor of Joplin, City Manager of Joplin and the Parks Director of Joplin to attend planning meeting.

John Eckhoff reported that St. Louis County Humans Services has plans for two “Stand Downs” to take place in the St. Louis area for homeless veterans. The first will take place on April 26 for one day and the second “Stand Down” will be in September for three days. Plans to conduct “Stand Down” in Kansas City area for June are underway. Approximately 85% - 95% of attendees are of minorities. Veteran Service Officers will be asked to attend.

James Whitfield recommended to get the information out on the Veterans Benefits Supermarkets as soon as possible to the veteran’s organizations and encouraged them to publish in their monthly publications. John Eckhoff indicated he requested Thomas Chapman to provide a list of contacts from MAVO. These dates will also be posted on the MVC Website.

Lt. Governor expressed his concerns about budget issue this year that General Relief dropped to \$9 per month from \$80 per month. A large number of the homeless veterans are eligible to receive the General Relief. The homeless usually consist of males with drug and alcohol issues and mental health issues and a significant number are veterans. He suggested contacting DFS and asking for a data list of addresses of recipients receiving General Relief and contacting them. Maria Chappelle-Nadal will draft a letter to DFS asking them to partnership with outreach program. Ralph Durnbaugh based concerns on sending letters to these recipients if they continue to relocate themselves frequently. John Eckhoff suggested possible case workers may be able to assist with this problem. Lt. Governor will arrange for a meeting with DFS addressing our concerns.

Lt. Governor reported on the Senior Rx Program “Door to Door Knock” project for the St. Louis area is getting underway. Questions will be asked **if served in the military and if they have an honorable discharge.**

Ralph Durnbaugh suggested Medicaid recipients who are also veterans list would also be helpful. This could save the state money if we can sign some of these up with VA benefits Lt. Governor will follow up on this issue and try to arrange a meeting.

Earned Income Tax Credit is a program of the IRS. Low income individuals can apply for a credit of some of the income taxes they have paid. This is pertinent for people who work temporary jobs. Lt. Governor will make contact to DOR about including mail stuffer in the envelope.

Suggestions to provide inner city hospitals and emergency rooms to include posters and information with 800# to call. Possible educate the discharge personnel in hospitals to provide information. Lt. Governor co-chairs on the Personal Independence Commission and will work to partnership with this program.

Homeless shelters, physician offices and mental health centers could also assist with posting posters and pamphlets in their facilities. Lt. Governor contact Mo Medical Association about assisting.

Important Reminder: In outreach project we need to also include families of veterans who may qualify for VA benefits in the information that we post.

The Lt. Governor again thanked everyone for their hard work and a special thank you to John Eckhoff for the success of the Veterans Benefits Supermarkets.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.